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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: Somalia, Obama, U.S.-Iraq Latam, Congo EU

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- ¶1. Lead Stories Summary

Editorials focused on the dissolution of the state parliament in Hesse, on the activities of pirates off Somalia's coast, and the offer of energy company Solarworld to buy carmaker Opel. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute opened with a report of rescue measures for Opel, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on the expected budget deficit for FY 09.

- ¶2. (Somalia) Pirate Activities

Regional radio station Norddeutscher Rundfunk radio of Hamburg commented: "Thus far the international community has idly watched the activities of pirates [off the Somali coast]. The navy ships of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' have the official order to fight terrorism and this has been going on for more than six years now. But thus far, we have not heard of any arrest. Instead, piracy has really begun to prosper in the region. "

According to Frankfurter Rundschau, "the much lauded international community of nations is about to take a practical decisions: Soon war ships from the European Union will safeguard the maritime sea routes of the Somali coast from the plague of modern pirates. Tens of thousands of defenseless children, women, and men in eastern Congo, however, are likely to wait in vain for the European community that shares the same values to protect them from the ravaging of marauding, cruel soldiers. But the people there deserve no less protection than the oil tankers."

Handelsblatt editorialized: "The protection of maritime routes is vital for the global economy and therefore deserves highest priority. That is why it is all the more surprising to see the carelessness that the international community has demonstrated for months towards the pirates' activities off the Somali coast. The hijacking of a supertanker has shown the limited cooperation of the

international community. In vast area of the seas a terrifying lawlessness still dominates the 21st century."

Berliner Zeitung opined: "One wants to wait before sending a UN force to Somalia until it has become more peaceful. But it is clear that the fight against the pirates can be won only from the land. Only if a stable state order dominates in Somalia again, will it be possible to fight pirates nests. Only if jobs are again available, will the run for the pirate trade cease. Only if there is again a Somali coast guard, will it be possible to effectively control the Somali coast."

Nachrichten noted: "The basic question remains whether there will ever be a permanent solution in bypassing the mainland. For decades, the international community has left Somali to its fate by shrugging its shoulders. This is now coming back to haunt it. This state has disintegrated. Bloody clashes between clans, the war with Ethiopia, the increasing influence of radical Islamists, which cannot be contained by anti-terror units on the sea, and now the lucrative business sector of piracy are, in the end, the result of international ignorance."

13. (U.S.) Obama Team

Sueddeutsche Zeitung had this to say: "Not Obama's message [to protect the climate] as such is surprising, but the timing. The financial crisis is overshadowing the long-term climate change problem, but, nevertheless, Obama is calling per video for a giant restructuring of the U.S. President-elect Obama has now claimed a leading role for the United States, but there is even more. He has demonstrated leadership strength. We have not seen this strength before. The Europeans could have filled this vacuum, but they are too weak to do so. The signal from Washington, which is uncompromising and unmistakable, could give the UN climate conference in Poznan at the beginning of December a new impetus."

Die tageszeitung judged: "Barack Obama now wants to save the climate. With his remarks, the United States is now bidding farewell to the careless use of resources in the United States. But it is much more important that the large companies are now also calling for strict climate protection laws. Following the financing institutions, the companies are now also bidding farewell to the previous dogma that the free play of market forces with as little state intervention as possible will help society thrive. It is to be hoped that this view will remain dominant after the recovery of the global economy."

In the view of Tagesspiegel, "Barack Obama's magic is based to a great extent on the promise to lead the United States to a 'new era' and to leave 'old politics' behind. It was his core argument against Hillary Clinton. But now he is nominating only people we know from the Clinton years. Does this mean, Obama is a phoney, who promises change but relies on the decision-makers from the past? But this is not the case. Obama is relying on a reservoir and is not risking a new beginning with idealistic masterminds without any practical governing experience. Something else is characteristic: Obama was able to get the support of many from the Clinton team when Hillary was still the favorite presidential Democratic candidate. The formation of the new administration is still in its infancy. His team is composed of many facets and even the current picture demonstrates one thing: Clinton to the outside, Obama to the inside."

Frankfurter Allgemeine deals with the nomination of Eric Holder as Attorney General and wrote: "Former deputy attorney general Eric Holder, as first African American, is to take over the job as attorney general in the new Obama administration. Holder's confirmation in the Senate is considered certain and the most influential senators already signaled their approval. Unlike his future boss, Holder is an opponent to the death penalty."

14. (U.S.-Iraq) Status of Forces Agreement

According to Handelsblatt, "There is a system behind the lamenting about SOFA among all sides involved. If the Iraqi parliament approves the agreement next week, it will be of use for everyone, and probably Barack Obama will profit the most, because he promised in the election campaign to bring back the U.S. forces within 16

months. But SOFA would give the new U.S. administration a greater scope of action, and it has sufficient 'grey zones' that are open to interpretation. For Iraq's Premier al-Maliki, the agreement would be gold value because he could celebrate himself as the one who laid down the rules for the U.S. withdrawal before the regional elections on January 31. For Barack Obama, SOFA would be a reason to take the haste out of the issue, and for U.S. Chief of Staff, General Mullen, this three-year horizon would create room to maneuver. But no one wants to admit this publicly."

15. (Latam) China's Influence

Berliner Zeitung dealt with China's influence in Latin America and observed: "China wants to establish closer links with the countries in Latin America. A few days before the APEC summit, China has now presented a 'White Book on Latin America.' President Hu is now traveling the region and China aims at increasing trade exchange with the states in South and Central America to deepen cooperation in the energy sector in particular and to conclude free trade agreements. Over the past few years, China has developed into the most important trading partner for a few countries in South America in particular and is challenging the U.S. influence in the region."

16. (Africa) Congo

Die Welt dealt with President Khler's appeal to the EU to send soldiers to Congo. The paper opined: "The Bundeswehr is working under full capacity with 7,100 troops operating abroad. That is why the Bundeswehr must set priorities. In Afghanistan, where our security and our interests are directly affected, Germany is not doing enough to win the war against the Taliban. Our mission in Darfur continues to remain under the 29 soldiers that the Bundestag approved, even though the mission there lacks the most essential things. That is why it is not very reasonable to seek new tasks. Europe is the most important donor for Congo but also for Rwanda. It is clearly too early to talk about the use of troops before these means of pressure have been used."

Regional daily Braunschweiger Zeitung noted: "With out hearts we must second President Khler. In Congo, the merciless killing between ethnic groups in 1994, is now repeating itself. Would a European force be able to stop the genocide? This would probably only be the case if it massively intervened over a period of years, if not decades. Such a policy could not be asserted in Europe, as much as we would like to support Khler. The world will again helplessly watch when people make apocalypse a reality."

17. (EU) Economic Stimulus Package

In the view of Financial Times Deutschland, "the impact of the financial crisis is coming closer every day and with a breathtaking speed. Only a few weeks, economic stimuli programs were looked down upon. When this taboo fell, the government in Berlin insisted on developing its own program and to give up plans for an overall European solution. But now it is becoming increasingly clear that, like with the bailout program for banks, joint action of the 27 EU nations will be necessary. In view of the depth of the crisis it is good that the EU is now getting its act together and is launching an urgently necessary action. But it is a great danger that such a package will be talked to death and pulled to pieces in a few countries."

TIMKEN